

TRIBAL PROGRAM NEWS

Ask Raven

Raven will answer your questions about problems associated with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Look for boxes in tribal offices with Raven's picture. You can leave your questions for Raven in these boxes. Those questions suitable Siletz News will be answered here. If you want a confidential answer to a question, please leave an address and Raven will contact you.

Dear Readers: I received a letter from a friend and I would like to share it with you this month.

To My Good Friend Raven,

All of my life, I was told by our elders that our children are sacred. As a parent, I am shown daily that this statement is true. Sacred more so for the Native American as our newborns represent a light out of the darkness some refer to as the ongoing Native American holocaust.

Like the thousands of turtles when born that scurry up the sandy beaches toward safety, our children are under attack from the predators of our environment. For today's newborn, a new and deadly predator called ice, crystal, speed, and crank is disrupting their quest for life even before their first breath.

In some Native communities these drugs are knocking on the door. For others, it already has a strangle hold. In the true spirit of the trickster, it is cunning, baffling, attacking first what is most precious to our children – their parents.

Crystal meth in our tribal communities is a symptom of great social challenges. It is a symptom of great personal struggles. It is a symptom of the assimilation process. Acknowledging this new challenge is the first step toward healing.

No matter what drug of choice is abused, 95 percent of both men and women abuse drugs and alcohol to cover memories, pain, and anger of a traumatic past. For Native Americans this includes, but by no means is limited to, intergenerational physical and sexual abuse.

Alcohol, drugs, and irresponsible sexual behavior are a temporary and potentially deadly distraction from the realities of poverty, low self-esteem, and lack of opportunity that is common in many tribal populations.

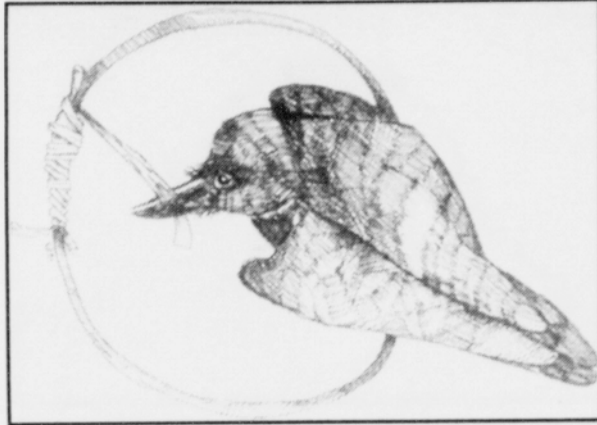
Meth Task Force Meeting

May 3 – 5:30 p.m.

Siletz Community Health Clinic
Conference Room

The Meth Task Force is open to all community members – youth and adults. If you have questions or need more information, please call Janet or Delina at 541-444-8286 or 1-800-600-5599. You can make a difference!

Please join us!



America likes things bigger, faster, and cheaper. Meth fits these criteria well. It has the potential to be a larger problem than all other substance abuse issues combined. Meth pushes the body into a jaded adrenaline rush, numbing the brain, unnaturally hammering the heart and weakening blood vessels. Thus as a whole, diminishing the strength of our immune system.

On a community level, meth creates social problems at a much faster rate than the dysfunctions of alcoholism. It is often cheaper, with an intense high, and more deadly than that of other substances we commonly abuse. The high is never as intense as it is at first use.

In spite of this, users battle to relive the initial intensity by using more of the drug. Imagine a year's worth of life being wiped out in a few weeks' time. That is the toll meth can have on the body and in the erosion of our communities.

There are more and more cases within our tribal health systems of infants being born with the affects of meth in their bodies. Meth-exposed babies commonly act like their drug-affected parents – they are jittery, irritable, and not able to handle much stimulus.

Meth-exposed infants do not like to be touched. The aversion to touch can typically last until a child is 3 to 4 years old, but can continue. Meth-exposed infants have been known to sleep 23 hours a day. Many exhibit rapid breathing and have trouble swallowing and sucking.

In the first 12 to 24 hours after birth, some may seizure and in the first month, they may develop serious heart and respiratory problems. Some symptoms mimic asthma, making the infant more prone to illness such as pneumonia.

Depending on the amount of meth exposure during pregnancy, some infants need treatment for withdrawal. Infants exposed to meth prior to birth have reduced immune systems, increasing their risk for SIDS, viral hepatitis, and HIV/AIDS.

The methamphetamine risk to our Native American children can be twofold. The prenatal exposure is only one avenue.

Children who live in an environment where meth use and/or meth manufacturing is present also are in grave danger. In homes where meth is being used, children are not the priority.

Because of the amount of money that abusers utilize to keep their habit going, many children are going without their basic needs. It also can be common for the roles to be reversed,

Siletz Tribal Alcohol & Drug Programs

Prevention, Outpatient Treatment, and
Women's Transitional

Siletz: 1-800-600-5599 or
541-444-8286
Eugene: 541-484-4234

Salem: 503-390-9494
Portland: 503-238-1512

where the children end up parenting their younger siblings.

Children can be exposed to the harmful chemicals in processing and smoking meth, which will soak into walls and carpeting. This could lead to ingestion of the drug into the body through contact with the drug's chemical residue.

For individuals injecting the drug, children may have access to syringes, which is an avenue to contract not only the drug, but also hepatitis and HIV. Children being raised in "meth homes" can become targets for abuse by parents and parents' friends. Meth users may tend to be paranoid and agitated. Normal child activity can appear threatening to someone high on meth.

It is worthy to note that meth use can turn to addiction in a very short time. It is common for users to graduate from smoking meth to shooting meth through intravenous drug use.

Meth addiction can lead to stealing syringes from our diabetic patients. Often these needles are replaced so that the user is not caught stealing, thus placing our diabetic tribal members at grave risk for exposure to meth, hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS.

The extreme rates of sexually transmitted disease, soaring unintended pregnancy rates, and pre-existing substance abuse issues within our tribes are just tips of the iceberg. Methamphetamine use and its potential risk to our Native populations is a very serious and growing threat.

Tribal nations and families need to be proactive, creative, and aggressive in addressing this new challenge. If we fail to act now, we will lose the most precious resource our tribal nations hold – our people.

Andrew Catt-Iron Shell
STD/HIV Prevention Coordinator
Rosebud Sioux Tribe
Office of Minority Health
Capacity Building Advisory Board
Task Force Member

I hope you enjoyed reading this letter from my friend, Andrew.
Fondly, Raven

ATOD and Youth Delinquency Prevention

Parents, if you think your child may be at risk for alcohol, tobacco, or other drug problems and/or juvenile delinquency behaviors, please call Delina John or Jenifer Metcalf at 1-800-600-5599 or 541-444-8286

One of them will talk with you about risk factors and those things that help protect your child from developing those problems. They will help you make a prevention plan that will support you as a parent and provide your child with support for making good choices.



We are hoping to have a weekly river day this summer. If you are a youth who is interested in learning how to use a kayak or a canoe, please contact Jenifer or Delina to sign up.

Space is limited and participation will be on a "first-come, first-served" basis. We will try to help everyone who is interested have some river experience!



The front of the building that soon will house the Salem Area Office and the USDA food distribution warehouse.